Opportunity Online Hardware Program
ALA Evaluation Question Summary

Description

Participating libraries of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Opportunity Online hardware program completed an evaluation survey as part of the annual ALA Funding & Technology Access Study. Over 785 library branches participated in the final round of the Opportunity Online hardware program. 25 of these libraries (3%) reside in the state of South Dakota.
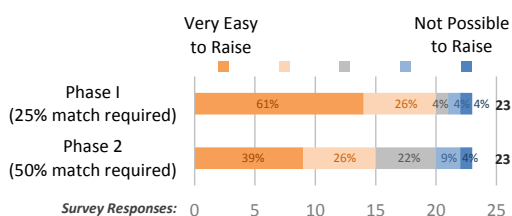
Key Findings – South Dakota

- Over 80% of participating libraries indicated that the grant program had a positive community impact in one or more ways.
- 70% of participating libraries have or will have some form of replacement/maintenance plan for public computers

- 46% of participating libraries expressed confidence in their ability to secure public funding for future technology expenses.

Ease of Raising the Matching Funds

Exhibit 1. Reported ease of raising the matching funds for each phase of the program:

- 87% of grant participants expressed ease in raising the first year match funds. Grant participants as a whole found the second year more difficult, yet 65% still classified the challenge as "Easy". (Exhibit 1)

- Participants cited a number or elements of success in raising the matching funds, most noticeably demonstrating the value of free computing, advocacy, and community support. (Exhibit 2)

- Over 55% of library participants felt that government unawareness of library technology needs was a significant barrier to raising matching funds. (Exhibit 3)

- Other barriers cited include lack of library staff time to fundraise, lack of community resources, and lack of commitment/interest from government. (Exhibit 3)

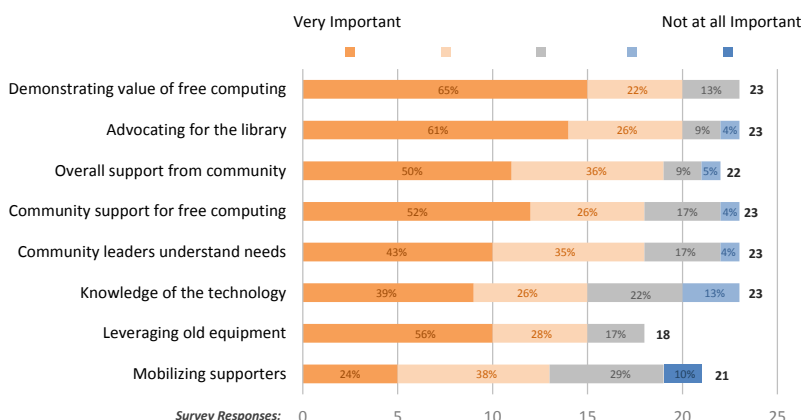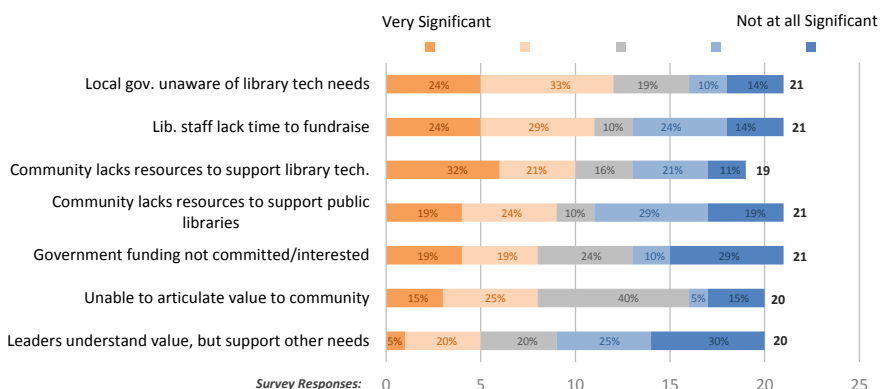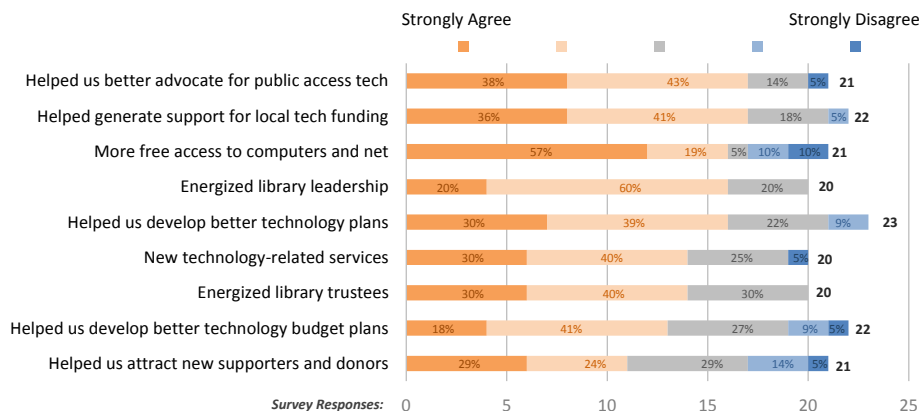*Exhibit 2. Critical elements of success in raising the matching funds:*

Exhibit 3. Major barriers to raising the matching funds: [1]

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April, 2011

Program Impact

- Over 80% of participating libraries indicated that the grant program had a positive community impact in one or more ways. (Exhibit 4)

- The majority of participating libraries noticed all of the positive impacts cited in the survey. (Exhibit 4)

- The top ranking impacts include help to better advocate for the library, help to generate support for local technology funding, and more free access to computers and the internet. (Exhibit 4)

Exhibit 4. Impacts of the grant program:

	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree

Helped us better advocate for public access tech — 38% / 43% / 14% / 5% — 21
Helped generate support for local tech funding — 36% / 41% / 18% / 5% — 22
More free access to computers and net — 57% / 19% / 5% / 10% / 10% — 21
Energized library leadership — 20% / 60% / 20% — 20
Helped us develop better technology plans — 30% / 39% / 22% / 9% — 23
New technology-related services — 30% / 40% / 25% / 5% — 20
Energized library trustees — 30% / 40% / 30% — 20
Helped us develop better technology budget plans — 18% / 41% / 27% / 9% / 5% — 22
Helped us attract new supporters and donors — 29% / 24% / 29% / 14% / 5% — 21

Survey Responses: 0 5 10 15 20 25

Public Access Technology Sustainability

- 70% of participating libraries have or will have some form of replacement/maintenance plan for public computers. (Exhibit 5)

- 46% of participating libraries expressed confidence in their ability to secure public funding for future technology expenses. (Exhibit 6)

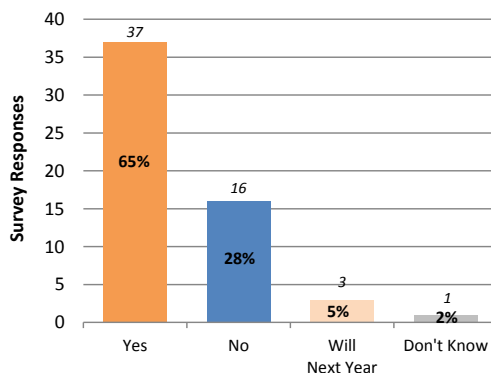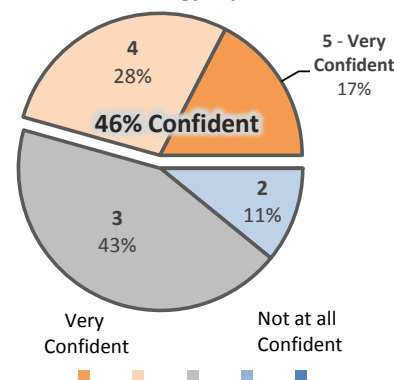**Exhibit 5. Does your budget include funds for ongoing replacement and maintenance of public computers? [2]**

	Yes	No	Will Next Year	Don't Know
count	37	16	3	1
%	65%	28%	5%	2%

Exhibit 6. Library confidence in ability secure public funding for future technology expenses:

- 4: 28%
- 5 - Very Confident: 17%
- 46% Confident
- 2: 11%
- 3: 43%
- Very Confident
- Not at all Confident

Sample Library Feedback on Grant Program [3]

Do you have any suggestions for, or thoughts about the Opportunity Online hardware grant program? (Cont.)
Provide refresher trainings
9 — I just think there is so much out there, and librarians are so busy that it is essential to stress these programs (Web Junction, Tech Cookbooks, Tech Atlas) and what they can do for us. I've heard of all these resources, but as librarians experience information overload with all the information we're continuously processing , I quite frankly have forgotten they existed and just how much they are exactly what I need. Keep pushing us! Also, thank you so very much for this grant and all the support and training it provides! It makes a huge difference in how we change our communities!
Be more flexible with grant funds
10 — We are very grateful to recieve it and also look forward to strengthening our advocacy skills at the workshop in November. I believe that it will also be helpful to have more latitude in how the funds are specifically used; i.e. what sorts of configurations we wish to purchase, in contrast with the previous grant we received years ago. Thank you

Source: American Library Association and University of Maryland, June 2010. *Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study, Opportunity Online Evaluation Questions, 2009-2010.*
2. 3 libraries answered "Other." These responses were grouped into the categories displayed where applicable, and all responses can be seen in the appendix.
3. All responses can be seen in the appendix.

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